

Review of 15 years WOCAT - Achievements, global issues, synergies and challenges for the future

Sustainable land management in response to global challenges

Hans Hurni, CDE

Global Disparities: Sustainable land management (SLM) is a response to the global challenge of land degradation, from arid to humid environments. There exist immense global disparities between and within wealthy and poor states, and we have to deal with them appropriately. This applies equally to the design and implementation of SLM. The number of poverty-stricken people world-wide is still increasing. There are about 900 million poor people globally, amongst whom 70% (about 600 million) live in rural areas. Food security and the production of agro-fuels are currently competing strongly for the land and its resources – and this struggle is all the more important given that the world stock of cereals would suffice only for 1-2 months. About 40% of the world population are small-scale farmers (2.6 billion), occupying about 40% of all cultivated land. Approximately 40% of all farmers are poor; that is surviving on less than US\$ 1.0 per day. For comparison, in the current financial crisis, the Swiss Bank UBS lost about US\$ 100 billion so far – enough to pay for one year of international world aid.

Sustainable Land Management: SLM is crucial for sustainable development, not only for controlling land degradation and desertification, but also for managing water resources and biodiversity. Furthermore SLM brings with it many new opportunities for adaptation to, and mitigating of, climate change. Finally, it leads to improved food production and provides other agricultural and ecological services not only to the farmers, but to all humankind.

World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies: WOCAT was designed in 1992 for furthering SLM knowledge. Since then, it has evolved from a simple project idea to a global network and institution. In 1997, the project became an international programme, and a few years later it changed into a global network and became the institutional network as we know it today. In the near future, WOCAT may grow further from an institution to an international standard for SLM in agriculture. My vision is, that by 2017, WOCAT will be known world-wide and institutionalized at national levels. A final hope is that by 2022 WOCAT will be visible through improved SLM practices on all farms throughout the world.



Introduction Speech of Hans Hurni, CDE
(Photo: Mats Gurtner)

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